

On the use of Calomel in the fevers of children.

By Mr. Garther

of Pennsylvania  
prefed. March 12<sup>th</sup> 1818

The climate unkind, or noxious food intakes  
To embryo nerves hereditary ills-

The feeble birth acquired diseases chase  
Till death extinguish the degenerate race.

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It has been observed by Physicians and others, that one half of the children born in London die before they reach the age of two years, and it is probable that the mortality is nearly as great in the other large cities of Europe; in the cities of the United States it is certainly not near so great, and that for the following reasons.

1<sup>st</sup> Weak and debilitated women may bring forth strong and healthy children, but *ceteris paribus* sickly women bear sickly children, and vice versa; and again, the easier the labour is, the better is the prospect of health for the child; now it is a fact disputed by none, that the women of this country are much more healthy than those of Europe, and it is equally beyond controversy that difficult labours are here comparatively very rare.

2<sup>nd</sup> In the higher classes of society in this country children are much more frequently nursed by their mothers than in Europe.

+ Dr Clarke says one fourth.

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3<sup>rd</sup> The lower classes of society are here much better provided for, and enjoy a degree of comfort and happiness totally unknown by those of the same rank in Europe.

4<sup>th</sup> We have not those extremes of wealth and poverty, so common in old countries, which are both such fruitful sources of disease. Many other general causes of the greater mortality of children in the cities of Europe might be adduced, the above will probably be accounted sufficient at present. Nevertheless even in this country, many more children are swept off by disease in proportion to their numbers than adults; the diseases of children are certainly much more violent than those of adults; but their powers of nature to resist disease are proportionably stronger. The fatality of the maladies of children may then be sought for in other causes besides their violence. By whom are their diseases treated? very frequently indeed not by Physicians, but by Quacks, Midwives, and nurses;

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what are the remedies used? Herb tea, cataplasms of bitter herbs, pads of wool's hair, of black lamb's wool and hundreds of other articles equally efficacious. How it may be in the cities of the United States I know not, but in the country a Physician is rarely called in to see a child, until it has been previously treated by the prescriptions of all the old women in the neighbourhood. This is an evil not to be remedied by any law, but only by the general diffusion of information among all classes of the community.

By the almost universal consent of practitioners and particularly in this country no one medicine is so much employed in the treatment of the diseases of children as Calomel, specified by the Professor of Chemistry, in the medical department of this University, to be the muriate of the protoxide of mercury. It may also be said without dread of contradiction, that no one medicine is employed with so much advantage in these cases;

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to use in some of the fevers of children in  
conjoint operation with other remedies shall be  
the subject of the present day.

Dr Chapman observes in his *Therapeutics*, Vol 1<sup>st</sup>  
page 202 article, (albomly,) "Whenever we wish  
a strong and permanent impression to be made  
on the alimentary canal and through it on the  
neighbouring viscera or on the system generally  
(stomach by universal consent is consecrated to  
these purposes!) for most of the diseases of chil-  
dren a permanent impression on the alimentary ca-  
nal and through it on the system generally is  
precisely what is wanted, and this impression  
(albomly alone will certainly and powerfully  
produce. Its being devoid of taste and smell,  
is also a matter of no small consequence in  
these cases.

The fevers of children are generally speaking pro-  
duced by the same causes as those of adults.  
Among these causes disorders of the digestive or-

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now ranks first. The digestive organs of children are disordered by many causes.

1<sup>st</sup> The application of cold to the surface of the body on to the feet, hence changing flannel

is a weaker state. as the body of the young is less robust and less vigorous, a fruitful source of the fevers of children; this is also very productive of cough, catarrh, diarrhoea &c. many children are disordered by improper articles of diet, as unripe fruits, cabbage, &c. shortbread cakes, cucumbers, and many other things which they have access to every day.

2<sup>nd</sup> Close confinement particularly in impure air; children confined in manufactories, which is frequent the case in England, are weak, debilitated, and unhealthy.

4<sup>th</sup> Climate; children living near mill dams, rivers & water courses generally, are very subject during the summer, to bowel complaints.

5<sup>th</sup> Dentition, many of the bowel complaints of

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children, it is well known are produced by this virus.

When the above or other causes produce a derangement in the digestive organs of children and a diarrhoea does not take place, a fever is frequently the consequence. In debilitated children a diarrhoea is most frequently the result, in the little those an inflammatory fever. ~~no fever was perceived~~  
if a child of opposite sex, another to all others  
and not to run about and play as usual;  
the pulse was somewhat excited. ~~the nose was dry;~~  
in some cases the symptoms of a cold in the head  
were present by the nostrils gave the sensation of  
being stopped up and a thin mucous distillate issues  
from them; the face was flushed, the tongue moist  
and furred, but in some cases of a yellow colour;  
and the bowels were costive.  
After these symptoms had continued from 2 to 3 hours,  
a fever was produced, the pulse then becomes more  
frequent and stronger, the face was flushed. The 10

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and heavy, the skin and head very hot, in some cases delirium was present, vomiting of bilious matter sometimes took place, in some cases a slight chill preceded, but in a majority it was not to be observed; the fever was a remittent having its exacerbations about 5 or 6 o'clock P.M. and its remissions about the same hour of A.M. The treatment followed except that a dose of purgative was exceedingly simple. If there was discharge of stomach or vomiting, an emetic of tart ant. it not dissolved in water was given, if delirium existed, if the fever was much flushed ~~and~~ the head hot and the pulse strong, from a child four or five years old from  $\frac{1}{2}$  V to VIII of blood were drawn. At night gr V or VI of calomel were given and next morning a table spoonful of cotton oil, or  $\frac{3}{4}$  of senna in infusion in two doses; that night the calomel was repeated and the purging medicine the next morning. This generally stopped the fever at once; if it did not the bleeding was repeated if any pulse a. a. or

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colonel and oil or anna were given twice more,  
as above; the fever then ceased as far as the  
underlying malady. In two cases it was thought nec-  
essary to divide the gums with a lancet; the ex-  
cavation produced by the cutting of the teeth no  
doubt aided much in these cases in the removal  
of the fever, certainly dividing the gums also  
aided it. The colonel by itself generally  
will not produce any excavation, but by the pres-  
tance of the other medicine a pretty brisk per-  
spiration was produced. The stools were abundant and of a  
dark brown or green colour, in two cases  
however were evacuated. In these cases it is  
probable the colonel did not act alone by its  
excavating power; it is more consistent with the  
present state of our medical science to sup-  
pose that it acted by making new impressions on  
the alimentary canal (and by sympathy on the gan-  
tem generally) and of necessity destroying those  
which had produced such symptoms  
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to have been the disease of the country,  
or from his symptoms generally, it may  
sufficiently appear that the hydrocephalus was the  
affection of his brain. In which case he was  
destituted of reason. The doctor however  
refuses to be bound to this, and  
he would rather, to make a short  
and to the point, to say he had  
no doubt in a more extended examination, in  
process of the facts, not only to have obtained  
of other methods of cure, as was stated  
in the Testament of the late deceased doctor  
Purcell, but also in view of the  
state of a poor old man of weak body,  
no collection was made  
in the poor box, and all that was collected  
in the gathering, which at a sum less than  
a shilling, was to be given, except one shilling  
there was a collection which amounted to a  
small sum, and a sum less than a shilling.

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to 1000 gr. of the oil of the bark  
of the tree and 100 gr. of the  
salt of the sea.

He said the oil was fat at  
first and when it became white  
and hard it was good. The oil  
in barrels were generally water and  
at a slight water two or three days. He said  
it was not good to eat it raw  
or to drink it. He said the oil  
was good to eat with. He said it was  
good for the body and the bones  
strong. He had been sick fifteen or twenty days  
and he had taken the oil.

The following extract was dictated, the gov.  
of colonial were given at salt and a little  
thereof of cayenne pepper. The extract  
so produced was in a quantity, the consisted  
of a small water bottle at the first used with  
a quantity of sugar. This was to be used and



and at 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> at 10<sup>th</sup>  
the features of the human countenance and the  
11<sup>th</sup> a written above the head of the 11<sup>th</sup>  
was made at night at a table covered with a  
white cloth, above the shoulders of a black  
liver bird with green feathers. 9<sup>th</sup> x<sup>th</sup> of the month  
were the men made this day for two days.  
The first of the month was so much informed  
her spirit was not returned. The next day a  
portion of the bird in the morning the men  
at night had to search for the spirit and  
got of a man who was a man and not man  
but spirit and it was made at night and  
the 11<sup>th</sup> the next morning they the men and  
the spirit was given in before going of the bird and  
the men were still as for as much was in  
the countenance of the bird was removed and the pa-  
tent has remained in highest secret ever since.  
cannibals did not desirous, and planned were never  
at the cabin.

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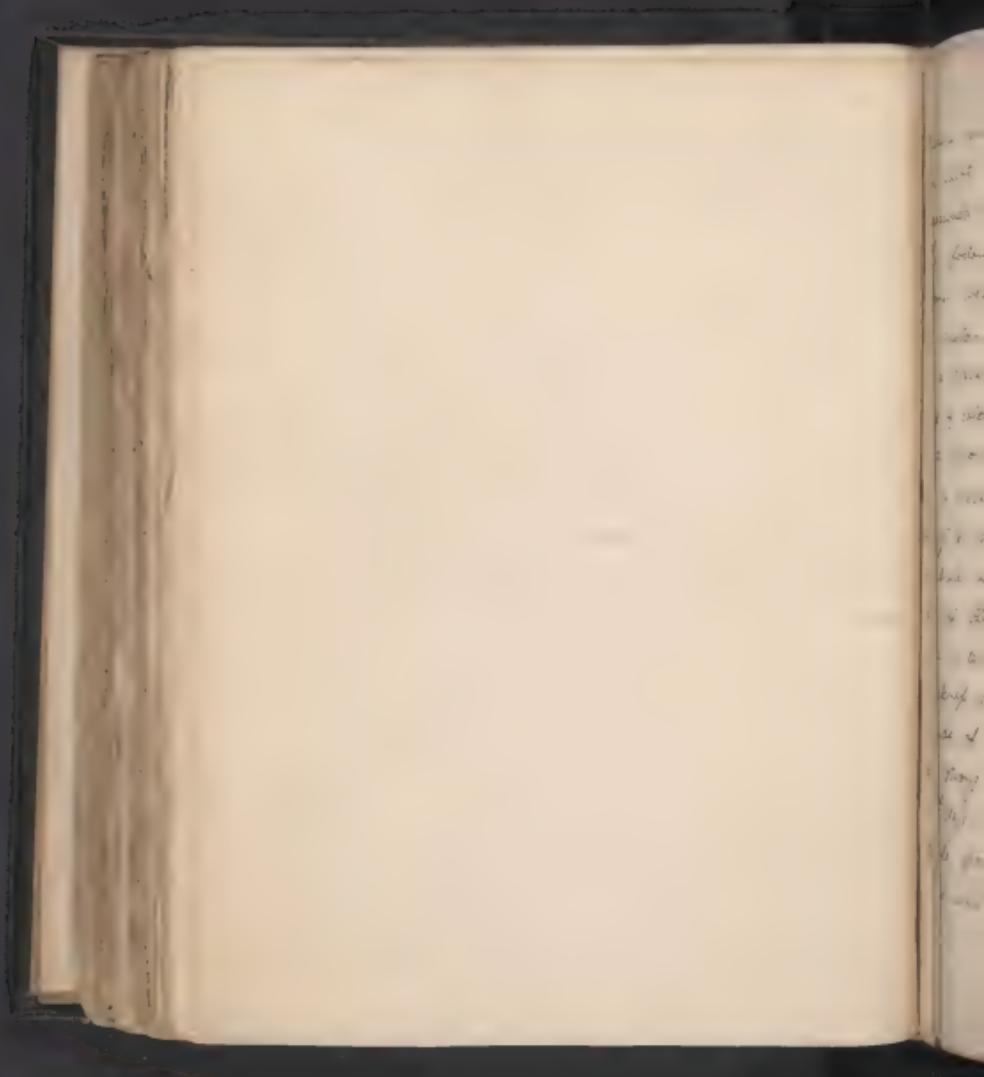
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Size 3<sup>rd</sup> of her size and six inches high,  
was infected with the disease of erysipelas;  
she had a slow convalescence. The excretions were  
very small; but in the afternoon and the  
evenings about 6 o'clock in the dark with much  
difficulty she passed in the evenings over 100-  
110, and in the evenings about 128 or 130 strokes in  
the minute and with some difficulty. Her convalescence  
nearly seemed to exacerbations, her complexion was  
tarnid and hard, and she complained of pain when  
it was pressed; her bowels were constipated and  
froes were discharged with difficulty in their ex-  
cretion, being of a very dark colour and a  
woman well much like those mentioned in the former  
case. She sometimes complained of pain in the fingers  
of her eyes were much distended. Her appetite was  
very bad; she remained in one position during the  
whole day, and never took meat when ~~she~~  
question her tongue was of a dark colour  
yellow and rough, and her breath stank in y-



perverse and mannered movements were next those of  
an idiot. This has been unceas'd three months before  
prescribed for.

The following treatment was used. 10<sup>th</sup> day 2 drs of  
calomel were given at night and a large spoonful  
of castor oil next morning; the evacuations were  
of a dark colour and small in quantity, 12<sup>th</sup> day  
5 drs of calomel were given at night and 2 drs of Sibbald  
next morning, the evacuations were very abundant,  
of a dark colour and a peculiar fetid smell. 13<sup>th</sup>  
day 5 drs of calomel were given at night and 2 drs of  
Sibbald next morning; the evacuations were abundant  
and of the appearance above mentioned. The medicines  
were discontinued for a day, partly on account of the  
weakness of the patient, and partly owing to the un-  
soundness of her intellect, a small quantity of wine with  
and strong beef soup were given during this time.

14<sup>th</sup> day) 5 drs of calomel were given at night and a  
table spoonful of castor oil next morning to concen-  
trate even to some degree the morbid matter.

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were now given every other day for two weeks.  
Her stools had now become of the natural appearance,  
her abdomen had subsided her const. was good  
and her bowels had completely recovered. The enemas  
were discontinued supposing her to be perfectly well.  
In three weeks all her complaints had subsided,  
and that without any assignable cause and said  
had precisely the same symptoms and appearance as  
she had before our medicines were introduced.

Under these circumstances the following treatment was  
pursued: 1<sup>st</sup> day 9<sup>oz</sup> of calomel were given at night  
and a table spoonful of castor oil next morning; the  
evacuations were pretty abundant and precisely of  
the appearance above described. 1<sup>st</sup> day 9<sup>oz</sup> of calomel  
were given at night 9<sup>oz</sup> of rhubarb next morning 9<sup>oz</sup> in  
9<sup>oz</sup> of calomel were given at night and 9<sup>oz</sup> of bellad.  
next morning the calomel was discontinued 9<sup>oz</sup> of al-  
uminous were then given every other day for two  
weeks. Then 9<sup>oz</sup> of aloof were given at night and  
a table spoonful of castor oil next morning.

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28<sup>th</sup> Jan 1821, 1/2 oz of calomel were given at night.  
X of calomel next morning. The white mucus,  
of ferment matter (cayenne) was seen, this time  
was unusual; the stools at noon & one o'clock  
at all the symptoms had subsided. 1/2 oz of calomel  
were given every other day for one week. 29<sup>th</sup> Jan,  
9/16 of calomel were given at night and 1/2 oz of  
calomel next morning. The appetite of the patient  
is now strong, and the stools perfectly regular  
and what use of more consequence the issues  
are bright and his countenance has lost that  
deadly appearance and he is perfectly intelligent.  
From this time he has remained in perfect health  
the time of cure is short and consisting  
consists of beef, chicken and mutton meat, soup,  
stale bread, turnip and turnip root to clean  
the bowels. He used to take emetics as in these  
days, it being common.

In these two cases the disease was probably  
probably caused by the same cause as in the first case,



the 3<sup>rd</sup> application of the decoction, but, the improvement is still not to be measured by the number of pustules produced, or at least not so, but by the alteration of the elementary parts, or more exactly of the latter, for the whole set of symptoms of disease are thus altered.

In these cases the stomach and bowels had been disordered for some time, hence it was necessary to repeat the remedies often, not to ravage the bowels completely so well as to alter the existing state of those parts. The course in all the above cases was seven or eight but it might remain some time in the bowels and of course be often repeated making more permanent impressions. In cases of children a salivation is no doubt a dangerous evil, and always much to be dreaded, in the above case not the smallest symptom of a sour mouth existed, and in cases of croup and hydrocephalus, much larger quantities of mucus have been used without apprehending any danger from that cause.



The above copy is necessarily very short and imperfect,  
as it contains only the experience of a student of  
Medicine, in the <sup>shot</sup> of a country practitioner during  
a few months. 



